

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Bear Creek Lake State Park  
other names/site number #024-0034

**2. Location**

street & number 22 Bear Creek Lake Road not for publication N/A  
city or town Cumberland vicinity X  
state Virginia code VA county Cumberland code 049 zip code 23040

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally X statewide \_\_\_\_\_ locally. (\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. (\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

\_\_\_\_ entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

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**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private  
☐ public-local  
☒ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

☐ building(s)  
☒ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>3</u>	<u>24</u> buildings
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>6</u>	<u>2</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>13</u>	<u>26</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) Civilian Conservation Corps Parks of Virginia, MPS

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Recreation/Culture</u>	Sub: <u>Outdoor Recreation</u>
<u>Landscape</u>	<u>Park</u>
<u>Transportation</u>	<u>Road-related</u>
<u>Transportation</u>	<u>Pedestrian-related</u>
<u>Industry/Processing/Extraction</u>	<u>Waterworks</u>

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Recreation/Culture</u>	Sub: <u>Outdoor Recreation</u>
<u>Landscape</u>	<u>Park</u>
<u>Transportation</u>	<u>Road-related</u>
<u>Transportation</u>	<u>Pedestrian-related</u>
<u>Industry/Processing/Extraction</u>	<u>Waterworks</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>Camp</u>

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movements  
Modern

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
roof Asphalt  
walls Concrete, Wood  
other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Entertainment/Recreation

Landscape Architecture

**Period of Significance** 1938-1940

**Significant Dates** 1939

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A

**Architect/Builder** N/A

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #                     

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 324.23 includes 40-acre lake

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing

☒ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Meg Greene Malvasi  
organization William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research date May, August 2008  
street & number 13803 Sterlings Bridge Road telephone 804.763.3595  
city or town Midlothian state VA zip code 23112

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation  
street & number 203 Governor Street telephone 800-933-7275  
city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23219

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing

instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Bear Creek Lake State Park  
Cumberland County, VA**

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**Architectural Description  
Summary Statement**

Surrounded by the 16,000-acre Cumberland State Forest, is Bear Creek Lake State Park. The park consists of 324 acres of upland forest consisting of a variety of hardwood trees including oak and poplar, Virginia pine and Loblolly pine. Common wildlife found in the area includes Virginia Whitetail deer, wild turkeys, red foxes and grey squirrels. The central focus of the park is the 40-acre Bear Creek Lake that supports healthy populations of largemouth bass, crappie, bream and channel catfish. The park offers camping, cabins, a meeting facility, an archery range, picnic shelters, hiking and access to a 14-mile multi-use trail in the state forest. The Willis River, a small, slow moving tributary of the James, winds through Cumberland State Forest providing fishing opportunities to anyone with a canoe or small boat. Two canoe launches are located in Cumberland State Forest for access to the Willis River. In addition, the park also includes a single cabin lodge/bunkhouse, two residences for park rangers, a park office, maintenance sheds, well houses, and restroom facilities. Additional structures contained within the park includes bridges, a dam and spillway.

The park was one of four recreational areas developed by the Virginia Division of Forestry (now the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation) working in conjunction with the Forestry Service-controlled Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the Depression. While built during the same period as many of the National Park Service's State Parks, Holliday Lake was not held to the same strict design standards as found in those parks. Still, the influence of the National Park Service's design and layout can be seen in the landscape and architecture of Bear Creek Lake State Park.

**Detailed Description**

The topography of the park consists largely of gently sloping hills and some low-lying areas around the lake and beach. In general the layout of the park is such that there are discrete areas for particular activities. Recreational activities such as swimming, boating and fishing are concentrated around the lake and beach area. The major unifying elements at Bear Creek Lake as well as the other Recreational Demonstration Areas were similar to those of the first six state parks created approximately during period of the Depression. For Bear Creek Lake, the major park components consist of the vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems, the beach and swimming areas, the picnic areas, the dam, bridge and spillway, the campgrounds, lodge and cabins.

There are two main roads that connect the north and south sides of Bear Creek Lake; both roads are paved asphalt. Route 666 runs to the east and west on the north side of the lake. Located on the south side of this road is the park office with a small paved parking lot to the east of the building. A well house and a restroom facility are found to the south of the office, as is a picnic area that includes a picnic shelter and stone grille built in 1938. Grouped in a semi-circle to the west of the grille is a grouping of wood benches. A curving concrete sidewalk connects all these buildings, leading down to the lake area. To the south of the picnic area, construction is underway on a boat ramp.

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**Bear Creek Lake State Park  
Cumberland County, VA**

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To the east of the office, sitting in the middle of the road is the contact station for the park. Approximately one-tenth of a mile east of the station, located on the north side of the road is Campground C. The area, which is mostly flat with a variety of trees and bushes, contains picnic tables, a restroom facility and spaces for tents and trailers. A parking lot is located in the front of the restroom facility. To the east of the campground is a small bunkhouse cabin with a small parking lot in the front of the building. Across the road is a well-house. Heading to the east on the road, about a quarter of a mile, and located on the south side of the road is the park water tower. The road then begins to curve, heading south towards the lake area. Approximately another one-eighth a mile beyond the tower on the east side of the road is the new Bear Creek Meeting Hall with a large parking area directly in front of the building. To the north of the building is a large open, grassy lot, one of the few in the park. Across the street from the Meeting Hall is a concrete pump house. The road continues south, sloping towards the lake, ending in a parking lot. To the south is the boat house, the lakeside picnic shelter and another stone grille. To the west of the picnic area is the beach. To the north of the beach is the concession building. To the north of this building is a c.1938 well house, set back from the road.

Heading west back towards the park office and continuing, Route 666 leads to a small fork; heading south on Route 629, the road curves to the east becoming Bear Creek Lake Forest Road which leads to the cabin area. Grouped together are twelve cabins. The cabins consist of two and three bedrooms. Almost all offer a view of the water. The cabins are broken up into small groups of three and four buildings with each group clustered around a small paved parking lot.

Bear Creek Park also has six trails, one of which, the Cumberland Multi-Use can be used for hiking, bicycling, and horseback riding. The trails vary in length from .4 to 16 miles in length for a total of approximately 35 miles. The trails are located on both sides of the lake.

Heading north on Route 629 towards the park entrance are the two park ranger residences on the south side of the road. The maintenance area, located at the end of a slightly inclining gravel road is restricted and enclosed by a high chain link fence.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Bear Creek Lake State Park  
Cumberland County, VA

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**Inventory of Resources:**

The following inventory of resources was conducted in 2008 and reflects resources that are contributing and non-contributing to the historic district based on the period of significance and the integrity of the resources.

**Picnic Shelter #1, DHR # 024-0034-0001**

**Contributing (1-Structure)**

A vernacular interpretation of the 1930's Rustic style is this small, one-story picnic shelter, constructed of heavy, hewn, undressed rounded logs, using mortise and tenon construction, heavy nails and wood pegs. The side-gable roof covered with asphalt shingles has overhanging eaves, a raking cornice, and rounded exposed rafter tails. The roof's interior features exposed beam construction with heavy, log, king trusses in the gable ends; small log braces are found at each corner of the structure; the corner posts are connected by a simple log railing. The interior of the picnic shelter includes wood, built-in benches, a heavy slate floor and a small grouping of picnic tables.

**Lakeside Picnic Shelter, DHR # 024-0034-0002**

**Contributing (1-Structure)**

Almost identical to Shelter #1, this shelter has undergone some alteration as seen in the poured and molded concrete bases that now support the main shelter supports and the removal of the built-in benches as seen in Shelter #1.

**Well House, DHR # 024-0034-0003**

**Contributing (1-Building)**

This c.1938 one-story, one-bay, frame wellhouse rests on a concrete block foundation and is sheathed with wide vertical boards. The pyramidal roof is covered with asphalt shingles and has exposed, shaped rafter tails. On the east elevation is a central, single-leaf wood paneled door; on the north elevation is a single 6/6 wood sash window with a simple wood surround. Both the window and the door appear to be older than the building and may have come from an older house .

**Circulation System, DHR # 024-0034-0004**

**Contributing (7-Structure)**

The circulation system at Bear Creek Lake State Park consists of a main roadway that enters the park from the east; this roadway continues to the west ending at Bear Creek Lake near the concessions area and beach. Another main road circles the lake to the south and then west to Bear Creek Lake Forest Road. In addition, running to the west of the main road and contact station is a small series of interconnecting roads for the campsite area. Other resources included within the circulation system include gutters, curbs, and steps. Pedestrian circulation consists of a series of walking trails that run to the east and west, north and south of the park's main area and concrete walkways to the concession area and restroom. A multi-use trail that courses from the north and south is used by hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders.

**Picnic Areas, DHR # 024-0034-0005**

**Contributing (3-Sites)**

There are three picnic areas associated with Bear Creek Lake State Park. Two are marked by picnic shelters and are located to the south of the main road, near the lake area. The third picnic area is found to the north of the main road in Campground Area C and consists of a small number of picnic tables, grills and waste receptacles.



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**Bear Creek Lake State Park  
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**Spillway, Lake and Dam, DHR # 024-0034-0006**

**Contributing (2 Structures, 1 site)**

A tiered spillway constructed of coursed rubble rock, a poured concrete dam are located to the north and west of the 50-acre man-made lake. All were constructed in 1938.

**Park Office, DHR # 024-0034-0007**

**NC (1-Building)**

This c.1975, one-story, L-shaped, three bay, frame office sits on a raised foundation of concrete block; the building is sheathed with horizontal boards. Double cornerboards articulate the building's walls. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingle, has raking eaves, a boxed cornice and small rectangular louvered vents in the gable ends. A one-story, one-bay, shed roof with elbow brackets marks the single-leaf wood door with two raised panels and a 9-light window is located on the west wall. Window openings consist of vinyl sash 6/6. Attached to the north and west walls of the office is a modern pressure-treated wood deck.

**Restroom Facilities, DHR # 024-0034-0008**

**NC (1-Building)**

This c.1975 one-story, five bay, frame and vinyl-sided building rests on a low concrete block foundation. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingle and has overhanging eaves and brackets. A slightly projecting shed roof marks an inset entrance with three single-leaf wood, six-paneled doors. Window openings consist if two-light transom-styled openings.

**Wood Shed, DHR # 024-0034-0009**

**NC (1-Structure)**

This c.1975, one-story, one bay, frame and vertical board building has double cornerboards and rests on pressure-treated wood posts. The shed roof is covered with asphalt shingles. On the east wall is a single-leaf wood entrance door.

**Contact Station, DHR # 024-0034-0010**

**NC (1-Building)**

Marking the formal entrance to the park is this one-story, two-bay frame c.1975, contact station, sheathed in T-111 siding and resting on a poured concrete slab foundation. The side gable roof is covered with asphalt shingle with a boxed cornice. On the east and west walls are a slightly-off-center single-leaf wood entrance door. To one side of the door is a 1/1 sliding glass window. The building is located on a small concrete median with plantings situated in the middle of the road, just east of the main park office.

**Well House #2, DHR # 024-0034-0011**

**Contributing (1-Building)**

This c.1932 one-story concrete block building rests on a raised concrete block foundation. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Located at the southwest corner of the south elevation is a single-leaf slab wood door. Also attached to the south wall is a large metal tank.

**Restroom Facilities-Campground C, DHR # 024-0034-0012**

**NC (1-Building)**

This c.1975, one-story, four bay, concrete block building rests on a concrete block foundation. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles, has overhanging eaves and a boxed cornice. The two entrance doors consist of single-leaf wood with six-raised panels, covered by heavy screen doors. Window openings consist of slightly inset 1/1 sliding glass with wood surrounds.

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Bear Creek Lake State Park  
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**Bunkhouse/Camping Lodge, DHR # 024-0034-0013**

**NC (1-Building)**

This one-story, four bay, frame camp cabin is sheathed in a log veneer and rests on a molded concrete foundation patterned to look like random rubble stone. The side-gable roof is covered with standing seam metal with a boxed cornice. Attached to the south elevation is a modern wood deck with a simple wood balustrade; a six-panel, single-leaf wood door marks the entrance. Window openings consist of 6/9 vinyl with wood window surrounds topped by small wood hoods. The cabin was built in 2007.

**Water Tower, DHR # 024-0034-0014**

**NC (1-Structure)**

A metal forty-foot water tower that is no longer in service and scheduled to be demolished.

**Bear Creek Meeting Hall, DHR # 024-0034-0015**

**NC (1-Building)**

This one-story, three bay, frame building, built in 2007, is sheathed in a type of "beaded" board horizontal siding and rests on a foundation with coursed stone veneer. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingle; a chimney sheathed in the same board siding pierces the rear west slope of the roof. A projecting one-story, one-bay, front-gable roof "rustic-styled" porch with a king-post is attached to the front east facade, supported by square wood posts attached to coursed rubble stone piers. Double-leaf commercial metal and glass doors mark the central entrance. Window openings consist of tripartite windows of 4/12/4 lights are found.

**Well House, DHR # 024-0034-0016**

**Contributing (1-Building)**

This c. 1932, one-story parged, concrete block building rests on a low concrete block foundation. The flat roof has a beveled concrete cornice and a molded concrete frieze; there is evidence of horizontal board siding on the south wall of the building.

**Concessions Building, DHR # 024-0034-0017**

**NC (1-Building)**

To the north of the lake and beach area is the c.2000 concession building which also includes restroom facilities for men and women. The compound consists three one-story buildings sheathed in a type of modern beaded horizontal board siding; each building has a shed roof covered with asphalt shingles. On the south side of the concession building is an overhanging shed roof pent. Entrances consist of single-leaf, modern metal and glass commercial doors; windows are fixed plate glass. On the south side of the building is a large deck area with chairs and tables.

**Boat House, DHR # 024-0034-0018**

**NC (1-Building)**

This one-story, three bay, frame building, built c. 1972, is sheathed in T-111 siding with double cornerboards and rests on a raised foundation obscured by latticework panels. The shed roof is covered with asphalt shingles. A single-leaf wood paneled door marks the central entrance and is flanked by 1/1 vinyl sash windows. Attached to the rear west of the building is a small shed addition with double-leaf wood doors on the west wall.

**Laundry Building, DHR # 024-0034-0019**

**NC (1-Building)**

This one-story, one-bay frame laundry building, built in 2007 sits on a poured concrete slab foundation and is sheathed in board-and-batten siding. The side-gable roof is covered with standing seam metal. A one-story, one bay projecting front-gable roof porch is attached to the west side of the building. The central entrance consists of double-leaf metal security doors. A similar single-leaf door is located on the northwest corner of the north wall. The building is located approximately three-tenths of a mile south of the cabin area

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Bear Creek Lake State Park  
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**Cabins 1-11, DHR # 024-0034-0020/0031**

**NC (11-Buildings)**

These cabins, all built in 2007, are grouped together and located on the southern side of Bear Creek lake, north of Bear Creek Lake Forest Road. All have views of the water, except for Cabin #1. The one-story, two-bay, frame cabins rest on raised concrete block foundations and are sheathed in board-and-batten siding. The front-gable roofs are covered with standing seam metal have overhanging eaves and boxed cornices. An interior chimney sheathed in board-and-batten siding pierces each roof slope. Attached to one side of each cabin is a slightly projecting front-gable roof porch area supported by square wood posts. A modern wood deck is attached to the front elevation of the cabins; a single-leaf wood paneled door marks the off-center entrances. Window openings consist of paired 6/6 wood sash.

**Lodge, DHR # 024-0034-0032**

**NC (1-Building)**

This one-and-a-half-story, five bay, frame cabin dwelling, built in 2007, is sheathed in board-and-batten siding and rests on a coursed rubble foundation. The side-gable roof is covered with standing seam metal; on the north and south roof slopes are two front-gable dormers, each with a single light. A one-story, one-bay projecting front-gable roof porch with a stylized king-post is supported by square wood posts. The central entrance consists of double-leaf wood paneled doors with transom. Window openings are single and paired 6/6 wood sash. Attached to the rear of the cabin is a similar porch roof and a large wood deck area with simple wood balustrade.

**Office, DHR # 024-0034-0033**

**NC (1-Building)**

This c.1932 one-story, two bay, frame building is sheathed in vinyl siding and rests on high concrete block piers. The pyramidal roof is covered with asphalt shingles, has overhanging eaves and a boxed cornice. The cut-away porch is supported by a single square wood post connected to a simple wood balustrade; the off-center entrance consists of a single-leaf wood paneled door. Window openings consist of a 1/1 vinyl sash.

**Park Ranger's House, DHR # 024-0034-0034**

**NC (1-Building)**

This one-story, four bay, frame, single-family Ranch house dwelling is covered with wide vertical board siding and rests on a concrete block foundation. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles; triangular louvered vents are found in each gable end. A single-leaf wood slab door, covered by a modern metal storm door marks the off-center entrance. Window openings consist of single and paired vinyl 1/1 sash.

**Park Superintendent's House, DHR # 024-0034-0035**

**NC (1-Building)**

This c.1977 one-story, five bay, frame Ranch house is sheathed with vertical board siding and rests on a stretcher bond brick foundation. The gable-side roof is covered with asphalt shingles and overhanging eaves; on the west wall is an exterior end, shouldered brick chimney with a metal vent. An engaged cutaway front porch is supported by wood square posts connected to a simple wood balustrade. The off-center entrance consists of a single-leaf wood paneled door; window openings consist of 6/6 wood sash.

**Drainage Culvert, DHR # 024-0034-0036**

**Contributing (1-Structure)**

One of the few surviving historic resources in the park is this slate drainage culvert.

**Fireplace/Grill, DHR# 024-0034-0037-0038**

**Contributing (2 -Structures)**

Located at each of the two south picnic grounds is a c.1938-1939 coursed rubble stone fireplace/grill.

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Bear Creek Lake State Park  
Cumberland County, VA

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**Summary Statement**

Bear Creek Lake was built in 1938 as a project of the Virginia Department of Agriculture through the State Forestry Division and was one of four recreation sites developed in Virginia by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) working under the direction of the United States Forestry Service. Unlike state parks, which were created based on master plans prepared in conjunction with the National Park Service, that employed the use of the style known as Rustic architecture, a style which stressed simplicity in design, use of native building materials, avoidance of overly perfect construction lines to evoke a look not unlike something built by a pioneer craftsman, recreation areas such as Bear Creek Lake were designed and built without formal plans. The end result is a site that is more a vernacular expression of the Rustic architecture designs and workmanship seen in the national parks. Even though Bear Creek Lake has very few structures as the efforts of the Forestry Service and the CCC were strictly in clearing and restoring the park lands, what still remains from this period while appearing crudely built, is still an excellent example of Rustic-inspired design and craftsmanship. The park is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C for its association with CCC park development project and its park plan, respectively, with a statewide level of significance under the Multiple Property Submission for the CCC Parks with a period of significance from 1938-1940.

**Detailed Statement of Significance**

**The Formation of Recreation Demonstration Areas and the CCC**

By 1933, as the United States grappled with the economic and human toll of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt entertained a number of ideas to offer relief and hope to the American people. The most daunting task facing the president was to create meaningful jobs for the large numbers of unemployed Americans. Of particular concern was the lack of employment opportunities for young men.

On April 17, 1933, Roosevelt implemented one of the most successful programs of his administration: the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Unlike the National Relief Agency (NRA), the CCC did more than offer aid. The CCC provided jobs through a variety of projects that included the rehabilitation and development of national and state parks and other recreation facilities. The impact of these efforts was profound as countless young men helped shape the physical and cultural landscape of the nation's parks.

The efforts of the Roosevelt administration to deal with parks fell under the auspices of another agency, the Public Works Administration (PWA). In July, 1933, a National Planning Board, later called the National Resources Board, was charged with planning of "recreational requirements" and "recreational procedures," particularly with regard to national parks. The board also wanted to be as inclusive as possible and, by 1934 and 1935, enlisted the help of states to form their own planning boards to begin creating recreation projects that would, among other things, utilize the CCC.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the creation of new state parks was the establishment of Recreation Demonstration Areas (RDAs). These facilities were the brainchild of President Roosevelt's Land Planning Committee and the National Park Service. Both agencies agreed that one of the most pressing needs in many urban areas were large natural areas to provide recreational outlets for people, particularly those of lower and middle incomes. This need would be

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filled with the creation of the RDAs, a concept that was enthusiastically supported by the Land Planning Committee. Unlike the state parks, the emphasis of the RDAs was on large group recreational activities, rather than family outings or day trips. Lodges and cabins that could accommodate groups of campers for extended periods were constructed and used by civic or welfare organizations that provided recreation for disadvantaged children. The NPS envisioned the creation of large natural areas ranging in size from 2,000 to 10,000 acres in which low-maintenance camping and picnic facilities would be built.<sup>2</sup>

Acquiring the land for new parks and RDAs initiated a controversial experiment in the relocation of people and the reclamation of land. Carried out under the auspices of the Land Planning Committee (and later the Rural Resettlement Administration), the program would reclaim acres of land ruined or exhausted from the ruinous farm practices, particularly in the South, and that had become a tax burden to the state. Some of these lands were earmarked for Recreation Demonstration Areas, to be absorbed into the state and National Park Systems. Estimates suggest that approximately as many as 100 million acres with as many as 650,000 families living a marginal existence could be reclaimed for public use. Approximately \$25 million from the Public Works Administration was appropriated for land acquisition.<sup>3</sup>

In Virginia, government assistance and rural rehabilitation programs under the Resettlement Administration moved hundreds of families off the land. But not everyone found the government's actions laudable. The human cost could be devastating as the programs forced small farmers and their families to seek other kinds of work, which in many cases they were ill-suited or ill-equipped to do. Legal battles lasting for years were frequent, as the state struggled to move reluctant landowners off property now desired by the government. Eventually the state won the authority to condemn occupied land and evict the families living there.<sup>4</sup>

Between 1933 and 1948, four Recreation Demonstration Areas—Bear Creek Lake, Holliday Lake, Goodwin Lake, and Prince Edward Lake—were developed by the Forest Service and built by the CCC. Although these sites were not developed within the design framework of the NPS, they share some design features and approaches to planning, including long entry drives, organizing water features, and structures built out of natural materials to blend with the landscape.

The design of the four Virginia RDAs was in large part influenced by the conservation guidelines, aesthetics, and planning processes developed by the National Park Service for use in the National Parks and later in Virginia state parks. The NPS park design process, known as the Master Plan process, was developed over the course of several years as a way to accommodate the Park Service's dual obligation of conservation of natural resources and provision of those resources for human enjoyment. CCC personnel and park administrators in Virginia drew on the existing Master Plan process, as well as NPS personnel, to develop Master Plans for the first six Virginia State Parks. These Master Plans were then modified and implemented to some degree when the Virginia State Park Service began drawing up plans to create four recreational sites, one of which was Bear Creek Lake State Park.

The Virginia RDAs have a number of elements and approaches first developed or planned for the National and State Parks. Like the parks, the RDAs were to no more than a day's drive from a major population center. A body of water, in the case of the RDAs, a man-made body of water, provided a central organizing feature as well

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as the site of several types of recreation. Like the state parks, the RDAs were also discrete in their organization, separating the various uses of the area such as day use, service areas, ranger buildings, active recreation areas, and campsites.

In addition, the landscape and architectural aesthetics of the National Park Service guided the creation of the RDAs in Virginia. These ideas shaped relations between the natural and man-made landscape. Local materials and building traditions, as rough-hewn log picnic shelters or concrete block buildings, were used. Paths, stairs, trails, and bridges were unobtrusively built into the landscape with local stones. Dams, retaining walls, and spillways suggested natural forms without imitating them. Single entrance points into the parks were along carefully planned curving roads with intermittent views of open landscape. The conformity of the aesthetic and planning principles in the Virginia parks to those of National Parks was underscored by the publication of buildings from the Virginia parks in the three-volume 1938 edition of Albert H. Good's *Parks and Recreation Structures*.<sup>5</sup>

The CCC in Virginia undertook a massive construction effort in building not only six state parks, but the four RDAs. Unlike the six state parks that relied heavily on the labor of CCC, the four RDAs had limited CCC input. In some cases, the efforts of the CCC were little more than helping with the initial construction of the RDAs road systems or in clearing or reforesting the land.

### **Park Design Concepts and Recreation Area Design**

Despite the less grand nature of the Recreation Development Areas, they were still influenced to a great degree by the Master Plan designs drawn up by the National Park Service. Although simpler in execution and perhaps even cruder in architectural expression, the RDAs still captured the essence of what the National Parks and Virginia State Parks were trying to accomplish.

The first impression of the park and its associated buildings and natural areas were important in the planning process. As such, it was important that the road system work successfully in the overall design of the RDAs. The RDAs, like the state parks created roadways and circulation systems that emphasized and preserved the natural beauty of the area. In addition, the circulation system organized the park and connected the various areas of the RDAs to the main entrance. In general, the impact of the roadways was to be minimal and was to blend in with the natural features of the park. The roads were also to have a minimal impact on existing landforms. The RDA road systems were organized into major and minor roadways. The major roadways were comprised to the park's entrance road and roads leading to major recreational features in the park. The minor roads were spurs off the major road, did not connect to other roadways, and terminated at dead ends. These minor roads were also not designed to accommodate heavy traffic. Examples of major roadways are the roads leading to natural areas, to the beach and lake area, and the entrance road. Minor roadways are those leading to camping areas, cabin areas, park residences, and maintenance and shop areas.

An integral part of the park was the creation of a trail system, which allowed visitors to view the natural beauty of the park. The main purpose of the park, in addition to providing locations for sleeping, was to provide

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recreation. The variety of recreation provided depended on the park. As parks were to be planned preferably near a body of water, the park could provide water recreation such as swimming, fishing, and boating. These recreational activities required bath houses and the construction of piers and boat ramps. These buildings and structures were erected based upon the number of visitors expected at the park. The trails were developed based on available land and accessibility for hikers.

The picnic grounds at the recreation areas were all located in shaded locations near the water in order to take advantage of the spectacular views and cool breezes. Structures at the four recreation areas ranged from picnic shelters, fireplaces, toilets, and some maintenance buildings, though only Prince Edward State Park had a typical CCC maintenance area that included a shop, a garage, and sundry storage buildings.

Perhaps the most important distinction that separated the RDAs from the state parks was that the recreation areas were initially never intended for overnight use. As a result, certain types of buildings, such as ranger's quarters, offices, bathhouses and concessions areas, were never part of the original design plans. Also many of the construction details such as the stone culverts, retaining walls and steps are noticeably few or even absent from the recreation areas. In essence, even though the RDAs borrowed many of the basic design elements found in the state parks, the four areas tended to be much more modest undertakings.

### **The Creation of Bear Creek Lake State Park**

Unlike the other three RDAs built in Virginia, Bear Creek Lake Park's connection to the CCC is spotty. The project was overseen by the Virginia Department of Agriculture. According to what history is available, approximately one hundred men, including carpenters, farmers and unskilled laborers who needed work, built the man-made lake, two pavilions, a concession stand and six fireplaces in 1938. However, it has not been documented as to whether these workers were part of a CCC effort. It has been suggested that CCC workers helped clear the land. Bear Creek Lake was given to the Division of State Parks in 1940, and it was operated as a day-use recreation area. In 1962 the division added campgrounds and the area's name was changed to Bear Creek Lake State Park. During the 1970s, the park undertook an ambitious construction program during which time, new facilities such as administrative headquarters, restrooms, maintenance buildings, and residences for park rangers were built. In 1998, four new wells were constructed as was a new administrative office. In 2006, the park constructed twelve cabins, a lodge and the Bear Creek Lake Conference Center.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Ney C. Landrum, *The State Park Movement in America: A Critical Review*, Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 2004, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Landrum, pp. 144-145, Land and Community Associates, "Survey of State-Owned Properties: Division of Parks and Recreation," July 1988, pp. 42-43.

<sup>3</sup> Landrum, p. 144, Jennifer Catherine Reut and Bryan Clark Green. "Virginia State Parks Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1929-1936," Multiple Property Documentation Form, n.d., pp. 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> Reut and Green, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Land and Community Associates, "Survey of State-Owned Properties: Division of Parks and Recreation," July 1988, pp. 42-45.

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**Geographical Data**

**UTM Points**

**Zone 17, datum 27**

A 740590E 4157425N  
B 740740E 4157670N  
C 741040E 4157690N  
D 741555E 4157170N  
E 741698E 4156235N  
F 741435E 4156065N  
G 740390E 4156760N

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the nominated district is delineated by the polygon, whose vertices are marked by the above listed UTM reference points; and is shown on the attached scaled map as printed by the Department of Historic Resources GIS mapping system. The boundaries are all those known as the Bear Creek Lake State Park at 324.23 acres surrounded by Cumberland State Forest as provided by the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary for the Bear Creek Lake State Park is all that which is owned and operated as the Bear Creek Lake State Park by the Department of Conservation and Recreation within the Cumberland State Forest in Cumberland County, Virginia. The north, south, east, and west boundaries of Bear Creek Lake State Park encompass all of the architecturally and historically significant features and events that have conveyed significance to Bear Creek Lake State Park.

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All photographs taken by Meg Greene Malvasi April 16, 2008  
Digital Images stored at the Virginia department of Historic Resources

View: Picnic Shelter #1, South view  
Photo: 1 of 15

View: Picnic Shelter #1, Roof detail  
Photo: 2 of 15

View: Picnic Shelter #1, Framing detail  
Photo: 3 of 15

View: Picnic Area near Shelter #1, East view  
Photo: 4 of 15

View: Pump House, East elevation  
Photo: 5 of 15

View: Drainage area, South view  
Photo: 6 of 15

View: Detail, Drainage  
Photo: 7 of 15

View: Spillway, East view  
Photo: 8 of 15

View: Dam, South view  
Photo: 9 of 15

View: Bear Creek Lake & Dam, North view  
Photo: 10 of 15

View: Cabin #1, North elevation  
Photo: 11 of 15

View: Bear Creek Lake, South view  
Photo: 12 of 15

View: Bear Creek Lake, beach area, Northwest view  
Photo: 13 of 15

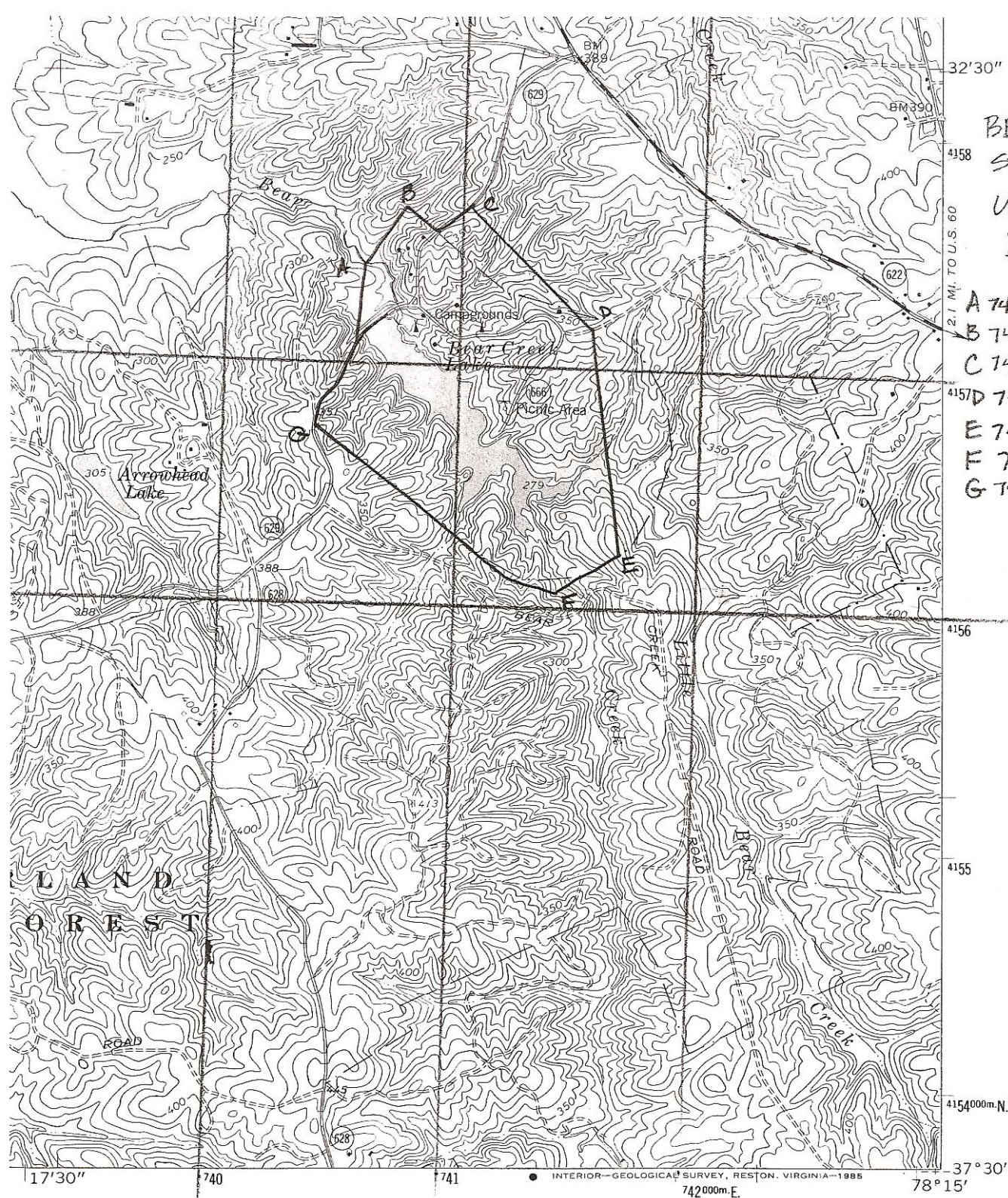
View: Bear Creek Lake, Picnic Area C, West view  
Photo: 14 of 15

View: Lakeside Shelter, South view  
Photo: 15 of 15



BEAR CREEK  
STATE PARK  
UTM ZONE 17  
DATUM 27

	E	N
A	740 590	4157 425
B	740 740	4157 670
C	741 040	4157 690
D	741 555	4157 170
E	741 698	4156 235
F	741 435	4156 065
G	740 390	4156 760



#### ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
○ Interstate Route	○ U. S. Route    ○ State Route



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

GOLD HILL, VA.

N3730—W7815/7.5

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with Commonwealth of Virginia agencies from aerial photographs taken 1979 and other source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1981

1968  
PHOTOREVISED 1981  
DMA 5359 III SE—SERIES V834